



# Jail District Sales Tax

## Frequently Asked Questions

- **Why is the Jail District Sales Tax being increased?**
  - A. The current Jail District Sales Tax does not provide enough money to fund the County-wide jail operations.
- **What will new money from the increase in the Jail District Sales Tax be used for?**
  - A. The new tax revenues will primarily address the jail's operating deficit and fund a new in-custody drug and alcohol treatment program. The sales tax collected is restricted by State law to "acquiring, constructing, operating, maintaining, and financing county jails and jail systems..." (ARS 48-4001). In-custody drug and alcohol treatment programs are one of the permitted uses of the monies.

After two months of investigation, the Citizens' Committee on the Jail Tax recommended, by a vote of 12-1, that the Jail District Board of Directors place a question on the ballot to increase the Jail District Sales Tax by two-tenths of a cent (2/10 of a cent or \$.002). The current Jail District Sales Tax is three-tenths of a cent (3/10 of a cent or \$.003), so the total Jail District Sales Tax will be one-half of a cent (1/2 of a cent or \$.005) if approved by the voters. The increase in the Sales Tax equates to an additional twenty cents (20¢) on a \$100 purchase.

- **Why use money from the Jail District Sales Tax increase for an In-Custody Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program?**
  - A. This is the only new program being considered for the jail. The need for an in-custody drug and alcohol program has been identified by the Sheriff to help stop the revolving door on substance abuse crimes. Such treatment programs have been effective in other places where they have been tried. The in-custody drug and alcohol treatment program is an important part of community-wide efforts to provide improved alcohol detoxification and drug treatment services. However, Jail District Sales Tax monies can only be used for services delivered in the jail.

A two-year study in California in the 1990's concluded that in-custody drug and alcohol treatment programs reduce crime and are cost effective. The California Drug and Alcohol Treatment Assessment (CALDATA) study examined 150,000 individuals who received treatment. The study concluded that, for every dollar spent on treatment, seven dollars were saved due to reduced crime and reduced hospital stays. Repeat criminal activity was reduced by two-thirds, and hospital episodes by one-third.

- **Exactly how much will the Jail District Sales Tax increase cost?**
  - A. The 2/10 of a cent increase equates to an additional twenty cents (20¢) on a \$100 purchase.
- **Who pays the Jail District Sales Tax, and on what purchases?**
  - A. The Jail District Sales Tax is collected on the same taxable purchases as the State sales tax. For example, household groceries are not taxed. Approximately 1/3 of the Jail District Sales Taxes will be paid by visitors and non-residents.
- **Couldn't a property tax be used to fund the jail?**
  - A. Yes. However, the Citizens' Committee on the Jail District recommended using a sales tax to pay for the jail because non-residents, tourists, and non-property owners all benefit from the criminal justice system and, therefore, should contribute to paying for the jail system. To generate as much revenue as the proposed Jail District Sales Tax would generate in 2007, the County's share of local primary property taxes would need to be raised by 75%, costing the owner of a \$200,000 home an additional \$178 per year. The impact on commercial property owners would be even greater because they pay a significantly higher property tax rate than residential property owners.

- **What will happen if a tax increase does not pass? Who will cover the approximate \$2 million jail budget deficit?**
  - A. The jail would continue to operate with a deficit and require money from the County General Fund, forcing cuts in other critical County services and programs. The Jail District would also have to consider further reductions in services. This may result in a ripple effect through the entire criminal justice system, which could negatively affect community safety and quality of life.
- **Will the funds generated by the tax cover the costs of the jail?**
  - A. Yes. The 1/2 cent Jail District Sales Tax will eliminate the current deficit. However, how long the Jail District Sales Tax will continue to cover the jail's costs depends on the growth in the local jail inmate population and how fast costs escalate. If the inmate population grows at 4% per year, then the Sales Tax would cover the jail's costs through at least 2027, based on current assumptions. If the inmate population or costs increase more rapidly, then the jail may return to a deficit. The Jail District, the County, the courts, and law enforcement are working together to control the growth of the local inmate population and other jail expenses.
- **What criminal justice system improvements have been made since 1995 that positively affect the jail population?**
  - A. Many improvements have been made to the criminal justice system since 1995. Highlights of two of those improvements include:

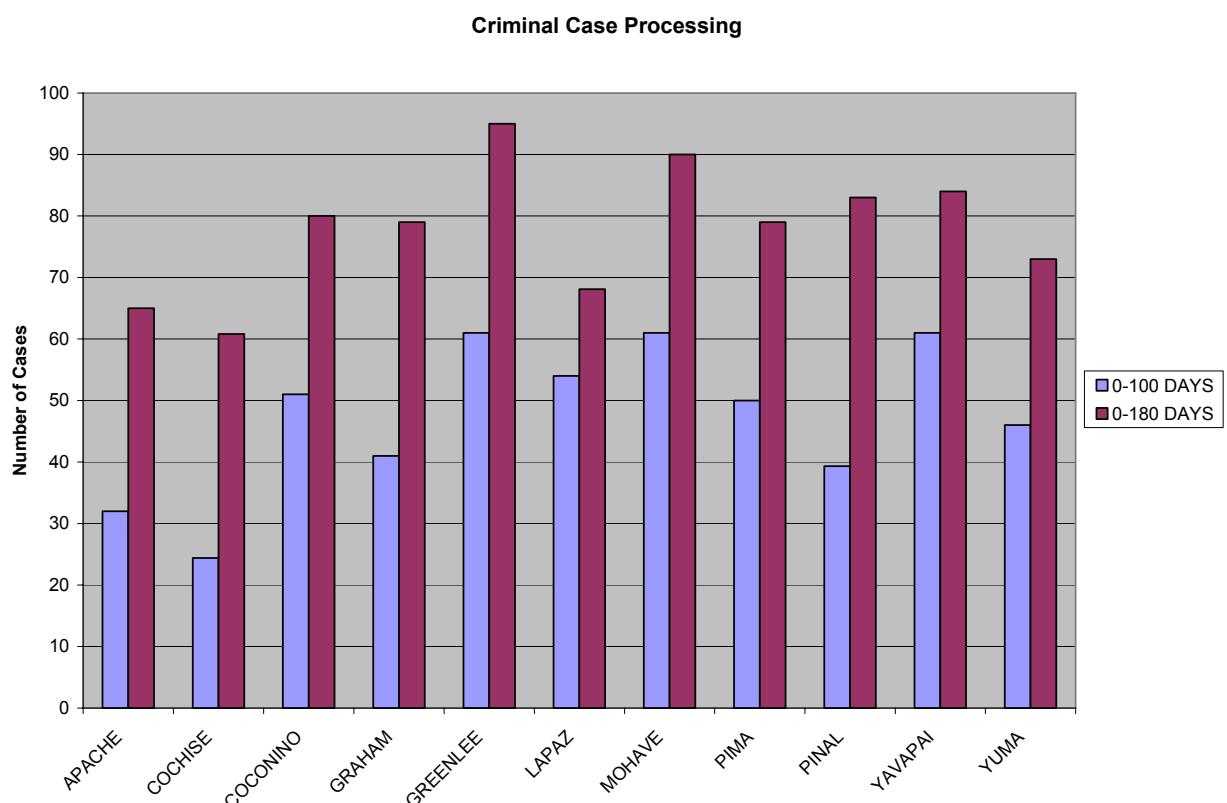
The establishment of a Pre-Trial Services Program, which provides background information to judges on those booked into the jail and also supervises inmates released by judges prior to trial. Judges interpret laws, review criminal backgrounds and consider community values when determining who is released from the jail. Pre-Trial Services supervised 279 persons released by judges in November 2005 compared to 59 persons in July 1996. Although releasing inmates to Pre-Trial Services can be an effective option for reducing the local jail population, community safety is the judges' primary goal when considering who to release from jail.

The County created the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) to facilitate improvements to the criminal justice system. The CJCC is comprised of representatives from all aspects of the criminal justice system, including judges, court administration, Jail District, law enforcement, county attorney's office, probation, public defender's office, and county administration. The CJCC has enacted a number of improvements and is finalizing a strategic plan that identifies recommendations for future improvements that can positively influence the local jail population.

- **How has Coconino County's criminal justice system performed compared to other counties?**

A. Coconino County's criminal justice system has received six State Chief Justice Awards over the past five years for outstanding performance. For example, in 2000 County courts received an award for successfully implementing the Criminal Case Re-Engineering Project, which improved the processing of criminal cases. Most recently, the County courts received a State Chief Justice Award for development of the Justice 2025 Long-Range Strategic Plan.

The chart below shows a comparison of criminal case processing time for various Arizona counties. The chart shows that Coconino County is well within the average time frames for processing criminal cases. The data below is reported to the State Supreme Court by each county annually.



- **Who is in the County jail? What crimes have the inmates been convicted of, or charged with?**

A. Inmates are in the County jail for a variety of reasons. Research conducted by the Coordinator for the County's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council indicated that inmates in the jail during 2005 were either charged with or convicted of the following:

Crimes Against Persons 17%  
 Crimes Against Property 10%  
 Drug/Alcohol Offenses 17%  
 Failure to Appear/Comply 23%

Probation Violations 9%  
Public Order Offenses 5%  
Other Jurisdictions' Warrants/Holds 16%  
Other reasons 3%

- **What are “Failure to Appear” and “Failure to Comply?”**
  - A. Failure to Appear and Failure to Comply warrants are issued by a judge when defendants fail to appear for a scheduled court date, or fail to comply with an order of the court, such as participating in a drug or alcohol assessment and/or treatment program. Often Failure to Appear and Failure to Comply indicates a tendency for undesirable behavior and creates additional work for the criminal justice system. Many of the original crimes committed by those arrested for Failure to Appear and Failure to Comply are drug and alcohol related, which also demonstrates the need for an in-custody drug and alcohol treatment program.

The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council initiated a new pilot program to address Failure to Appear incidences using volunteers to call those released prior to trial. Early results from the pilot program appear to reduce the number of Failure to Appear incidences. A similar program was instituted in Jefferson County, Colorado, which reduced the Failure to Appear incidence by about 50%.

- **Is the jail operating efficiently and effectively?**
  - A. Yes. During spring 2006, the Citizens' Committee on the Jail Tax conducted an investigation of the Jail District's financial status. Unanimously, the Citizens' Committee, as stated in their report, found that the jail "is operating efficiently, effectively and responsibly, even though it is under adverse financial conditions."

In 2004, at the Sheriff's request, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) conducted a study of the jail and criminal justice operations in Coconino County. The NIC found that the jail was operated effectively. Most of the NIC recommendations did not involve jail operations, but identified improvements to the criminal justice system (court operations). Many of their recommendations are being implemented. The Jail District follows the best practices as outlined by the American Corrections Association (ACA). Although formal certification by ACA is not required, the Jail District uses their guidelines to develop policies and direction for the jail.

- **How long will the Jail District Sales Tax last?**
  - A. The Jail District Sales Tax, if approved by voters, would be effective January 1, 2007. The current Jail District Sales Tax expires on June 30, 2012. The Jail District Board of Directors has placed a question on the ballot (Question 2) to extend the term of the Jail District Sales Tax by 15 years. If the extension is approved, then the Jail District Sales Tax cannot be extended beyond June 30, 2027 without voter approval. The Jail District Board of Directors wanted voters to have the authority to approve the tax at that time, if they choose to do so.